The History of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and the Legionary Movement



Corneliu Zelea Codreanu

The Early Life of Codreanu

Corneliu Zelea Codreanu was born on September 13, 1899 in the small town of Hushi in Moldavia. His father, Ion Zelea Codreanu, had been a nationalist fighter all his life, while his grandfather and great-grandfather were foresters. Corneliu Codreanu had been educated for five years, from age eleven to sixteen, at the military academy *Manastirea Dealului* (“the Cloister on the Hill”). Codreanu explained how his time there affected him (from the key book he wrote, *For My Legionaries*): "...my military education will be with me all my life. Order, discipline, hierarchy, molded into my blood at an early age, along with the sentiment of soldierly dignity, will constitute a guiding thread for my entire future activity. Here too, I was taught to speak little, a fact which later was to lead me to hate 'chatter boxing' and too much talk. Here I learned to love the trench and to despise the drawing room."

After Romania declared war on Austria-Hungary in August 1916, Codreanu and his father went to join the Romanian army moving into Transylvania. Codreanu was not old enough to be accepted as a volunteer, but still fought with the army in its advance and retreat across the

mountains. However, his father had been wounded in battle, and insisted that his son return home so that they do not both die in battle and leave his mother unsupported. However, a year later in 1917, Codreanu completed his military education in The Military School of Infantry at Botosani by 1918, but did not get the chance to join the front before the war ended.

After graduating from high school in 1919, Codreanu was accepted into the University of Iasi and left Husi for Iasi. He had already read many works by professors N. Iorga and A.C. Cuza, which taught him the ideals for Romania: "1.The unification of Romanian people. 2.The elevation of peasantry through land reform and political rights. 3. The solution of the Jewish problem." After arriving in Iasi, Codreanu found that the city and university was heavily influenced by Communist agitators and that even many professors were Marxists. The Romanian workers were experiencing terrible working conditions and had very low wages, so they had been drawn to Communism by Marxist propagandists. Students at the University of Iasi were also largely converted to Communism, and Communist student meetings attack the Army, Justice, Church, and the Crown, essentially propagating anti-Romanianism.

After doing some research, Codreanu discovered that the leaders of the Romanian Communist workers were neither Romanians nor workers. At Iasi, the "workers' movement" was led by Dr. Ghelerter along with Messrs, Gheler, Spiegler, and Schreiber. At the capital, Bucharest, the leaders were Ana Pauker and Ilie Moscovici. All of them, Codreanu found, were Jews. Realizing that like in Russia, where a largely Jewish-led Bolshevik revolution occurred a few years earlier, Romania was in danger of being taken over by Jewish Communists who would destroy everything Romanian, he commented:

> "If these had been victorious, would we have had at least a Romania led by a Romanian workers' regime? Would the Romanian workers have become masters of the country? No! The next day we would have become the slaves of the dirtiest tyranny: the Talmudic, Jewish tyranny. Greater Romania, after less than a second of existence, would have collapsed."

Early Political Activity

Codreanu then decided that he quickly needed to take action against the Communist movement, while the conservative students were not doing anything sufficient. He joined a small organization, the Guard of National Conscience, which had been recently created by Constantin Pancu, who was a well-known steel-worker. The members of the Guard of National Conscience, with Codreanu and Pancu at the head, made speeches and rallies to combat Communism and eventually even got into physical battles with groups of violent Communists. At the Nicolina railway works, where nearly all the workers were Communist and a large number of Jews also present, a general strike began. Conservative Romanians led by Pancu and Codreanu then met and marched around placing the national flags on various buildings while removing Communist red flags. Codreanu even heroically climbed on top of a factory to throw off the red flag and put up a Romanian one in its place. By the time he was down, the Communists workers were so impressed by his efforts that they allowed Codreanu and Pancu to leave without a fight. Everywhere across Romania news of this event was carried quickly, and the Communist movement soon was reduced and had no chance at success.

The Guard of National Conscience then declared its program for the improvement of the Romanian nation, which they called "National Christian Socialism." Codreanu explained that "It is not enough to defeat Communism. We must also fight for the rights of the workers. They have a right to bread and a fight to honor, We must fight against the oligarchic parties, creating national workers organizations which can gain their rights within the framework of the state and not against the state."

It was then, by 1920, that Codreanu started focusing on the problems at Iasi University, when they realized that Romanian universities, as revealed by the studies of professor I. Gavanescul, were swarming with Jews. The Jews, an alien people hostile to Romanian culture, formed about five percent of the population, and yet in Iasi a third of the students were Jews. Codreanu knew that the schools, which had an unreasonable number of Jews when compared to Romanians, forms the next leading class in Romania. Once the Jews become overwhelming in the leading class, Romania's national culture would be destroyed, because, as professor Cuza taught, Jews were an alien people culturally and racially and would only distort the culture of the nation in which they lived. This menace disturbed Codreanu and others who loved their Romanian nation, its culture, and the Orthodox Christian religion. Codreanu commented:

> "At Posada, Calugareni, on the Olt, jiu and Cerna rivers, at Turda; in the mountains of the unhappy and forgotten Moti of Vidra, all the way to Huedin and Alba-Iulia (the torture place of Horia and his brothers-in-arms), there are everywhere testimonies of battles and tombs of heroes. All over the Carpathians, from the Oltenian mountains at Dragoslavele and at Predeal, from Oituz to Vatra Dornei, on peaks and in valley bottoms, everywhere Romanian blood flowed like rivers. In the middle of the night, in difficult times for our people, we hear the call of the Romanian soil urging us to battle. I ask and I expect an answer: By what right do the Jews wish to take this land from us? On what historical argument do they base their pretensions and particularly the audacity with which they defy us Romanians, here in our own land? We are bound to this land by millions of tombs and millions of unseen threads that only our soul feels, and *woe* to those who shall try to snatch us from it."

The Jewish students at the University of Iasi continued encouraging Communism, but after his victory with Pancu, Codreanu could now put an end to the bullying of nationalist students by Jewish and Marxist students. Students who wore Russian caps as a sign of support for Bolshevism were beaten and their caps burnt. A Marxist student strike was then defeated by Codreanu and his friends when they seized the dining hall and insisted that students who do not work, do not get to eat. Soon afterwards, newspapers owned by Jews insulted King Ferdinand and Codrenau, to which Codreanu responded by leading a group to the papers' offices to wreck the presses.

In 1922, Codreanu graduated from Iasi University's Faculty of Law, and by then had made almost the entire university nationalist as well as having spread pro-Romanian and anti-Jewish concepts to other universities. In that same year, professors A.C. Cuza and Nicolae Paulescu, who Codreanu regarded as being some of the greatest intellectuals to teach Romanians about the Jewish Problem, published two articles in the magazine *Apararea Nationala* ("The National

Defense"): "The Science of Anti-Semitism" (by Cuza) and "The Talmud, the Kahal, Freemasonry" (by Paulescu, an excerpt from a book). Of this influential publication, Codreanu wrote: "The articles of Professors Cuza and Paulescu were religiously read by all the youth and had everywhere upon students both in Bucharest and in Cluj a resounding impact. We considered the publication of each issue a triumph, because it was for us another munitions transport for combating the arguments in the Jewish press."

He continued studying political economy and in the fall of 1922 traveled to Germany to register at the University of Berlin. While in Berlin he spoke with German nationalists and taught them what he knew of the Jewish problem. He also heard of Adolf Hitler, who, upon becoming more prominent, Codreanu thought of as a great anti-Jewish nationalist leader. It was also in Berlin that Codreanu heard of Mussolini's victory in Italy, at which he declared: "I rejoiced as much as if it were my own country's victory. There is, among all those in various parts of the world who serve their people, a kinship of sympathy, as there is such a kinship among those who labor for the destruction of peoples."

The National Christian Defense League & Reactions to Government Corruption

In December, 1922, Codreanu's education in Germany was suddenly halted, because a nation-wide anti-Jewish nationalist student movement exploded in Romania and Codreanu felt he had to return to join them at that crucial moment. While the students were making a strike for better conditions in universities as well as a limit on the number of Jews, Codreanu, Cuza, and a few others decided to hold a rally in March 3, 1923 in Iasi to create a new organization. This organization, which they decided to call "The League of Christian National Defense", was to be created once thousands of students would meet at the rally. Codreanu explained the banner of the National Christian Defense League (L.A.N.C.): "The cloth of these flags was black - a sign of mourning; in the center a round white spot, signifying our hopes surrounded by the darkness they will have to conquer; in the center of the white, a swastika, the symbol of anti-Semitic struggle throughout the world; and all around the flag, a band of the Romanian tricolor - red, yellow and blue."

However, just a few weeks afterwards the Romanian government, under pressure from influential Jews as in Romania as well as abroad, decided to change the Romanian constitution to allow almost all Jews to become Romanian citizens. This allowed an alien body in Romania, different in language, dress, religion, customs, racial type, and soul, to further infiltrate Romanian society and undoubtably Judaize its culture. Romanian nationalists were shocked and Codreanu so much that he cried. After explaining this situation in *For My Legionaries*, Codreanu reflects on how the great and highly respected Romanian leaders in 1879, after Romania won independence from the Ottoman Empire, took action to make sure that Jews would not gain any power in Romania, even though they were forced to give Jews a theoretical right of citizenship (which depended on qualification through military service, thus making only a few Jews citizens, since most Jews did not want to fight in war). These men, whose works were read by all nationalist students, were Vasile Conta, Vasile Alecsandri, Mihail Kogalniccanu, Mihail Eminescu, Bogdan Petriceicu Hajdeu, Costache Negri, A.D. Xenopol.

The larger Romanian parties ruling the government also refused to take any action against the increasing number of Jews flooding into universities, jeopardizing the nation's future. Codreanu wrote of them, "Fundamentally there was no distinction among them other than differences of form and personal interests-the same thing in different shapes. They did not even have the justification of differing opinions. Their only real motivation was the religion of personal interest." He also knew, having been educated by the works of Nicolae Paulescu, that the Jews used their economic, financial, and media power to influence the government's activities. Finally, filled with despair at the almost complete failure of the national student movement, Codreanu and his close friends, including Ion Mota, decided that they would assassinate the top Romanian politicians, top rabbis, and Jewish bankers. Codreanu wrote explaining why he was more concerned with going after the politicians:

> "We unanimously agreed that the first and greatest culprits were the treacherous Romanians who for Judah's silver pieces betrayed their people. The Jews are our enemies and as such they hate, poison, and exterminate us. Romanian leaders who cross into their camp are worse than enemies: they are traitors. The first and fiercest punishmment ought to fall first on the traitor, second on the enemy. If I had but one bullet and I were faced by both an enemy and a traitor, I would let the traitor have it."

However, one of the members of this group, Vernichescu, decided to betray them and they were arrested before they could take action. Upon being interrogated by the police, Codreanu decided that honesty was the only noble way to deal with the situation, and took full responsibility for the assassination plot. They spent some time in jail, where they felt a living spiritual force in the icon of Saint Michael the Archangel at the prison church, which led them to decide that a new group they would create should be named The Legion of Michael the Archangel.

The trial for the assassination plot was held at Bucharest, at which Codreanu and his friends were acquitted since the jurors, all Romanians, were sympathetic with their action due to their anger at the government's betrayal of the will of the Romanian people. However, upon leaving, Ion Mota felt that they could succeed in their efforts without killing their betrayer, who they recently discovered was Vernichescu. Mota had shot him in his cell on the day of the trial and thus remained in prison for a longer time to be tried for murder later (although he was acquitted there as well, since few had sympathy for the traitor).

Work for the L.A.N.C. and the Split with Cuza

After Codreanu returned to Iasi in May of 1924, he again started working for the National Christian Defense League. The youth wing of the L.A.N.C. of which Codreanu was a part, the Brotherhood of the Cross, was very low on money as well as labor and was no longer allowed to hold meetings in universities. They resorted to holding meetings in old wooden barracks, until they finally decided to build a "Christian cultural home" by their own work at Ungheni. With picks and shovels, even making their own bricks with the help of local brickmakers, they built this meeting house, which inspired local villagers (who simultaneously learned about the ideas of the regeneration of Romania).

However, while they were doing their construction work, they were brutally beaten several times

without any legal reason by policemen. Codreanu and other students were arrested and hauled off to the police station in Iasi, where the Police Prefect Manciu had them tortured while hanging upside-down with chains. Only with the intervention of Cuza and other leading citizens in Iasi were the students finally freed. The Jews in the area were extremely happy over the torture of the students, and rewarded Manciu, who received no punishment for his actions, by buying him a car. Months later in October, 1925, Codreanu was defending a student at court who was arrested at the raid on the Ungheni site. In this courtroom, Manciu burst in with several gendarmes (police type) and was prepared to harm Codreanu again. But Codreanu reacted quickly, refusing to be illegally beaten and humiliated, by taking out his revolver and shooting Manciu.

Codreanu was transferred to be tried at trial to Tunul Severin, as far south from Moldavia as possible in order to make sure that he was not in an area where everyone sympathized with him. Yet even there, while the policemen denied torturing the students, the jury knew the truth of what happened and proclaimed Codreanu innocent. Shortly after this trial he returned to Iasi and there married Elena Ilinoiu. From there he and his wife decided to travel to France where he would earn his doctorate in political economy at the University of Grenoble.

In May of 1927, Codreanu returned from France and found that the L.A.N.C. was split into two factions due to a lack of coordination and unity (specifically because of a confusion over the expulsion of a deputy), which he felt was the beginning of failure and disaster. Codreanu found that Cuza, the leader of one faction, was perfectly happy with the situation, which caused Codreanu to realize that Cuza was not a good leader. He commented on Cuza's leadership abilities: "If the doctrinaire is expected to master the science of researching and formulating truth, the leader of a political movement is expected to master the science and the art of organization, education and leadership of men, Professor Cuza, excelling and unsurpassed on the first plane, when brought down on the practical one showed himself ignorant, awkward..."

After failing to get the two factions, one led by professor Sumuleanu and the other by Cuza, to come to an agreement, and also after seeing Cuza willing to cooperate with corrupt politicians from other parties to an extent, Codreanu finally decided to slpit off. He thought that the youth, which was beginning to form a faction of its own, should become a totally new organization that would be better led and more unified. Codreanu and his best friends visited Cuza as well as Sumuleanu and declared their intentions to create a movement on their own. The students met at the "Christian cultural home" and founded their own fully independent group, the Legion of Michael the Archangel, which used the icon of Saint Michael as its symbol.

The Legion of Michael the Archangel

The Legion of Michael the Archangel did not present a party program and Codreanu did not even consider the Legion to be a political movement, but rather a spiritual movement whose aim was to improve Romania. He asserted that even the best political programs would be compromised if the Romanian were corrupted by the influence of Jews and greedy politicians. In *The Nest Leader's Manual*, he wrote: "The Politician's goal is to build a fortune, ours is to build our homeland flowering and strong. For her we will work and we will build. For her we will make each Romanian a hero, ready to fight, ready to sacrifice, ready to die."

The Legion was to be more of a school and an army for the creation of a New Man (*Omul Nou*), a generation of Romanians who, through their Christian spirituality and nationalism, would create a Greater Romania freed from darkness and oppression. A spiritual revolution would be the prerequisite for a political revolution. He declared in *For My Legionaries*:

> "From this Legionary school a new man will have to emerge, a man with heroic qualities; a giant of our history to do battle and win over all the enemies of our Fatherland, his battle and victory having to extend even beyond the material world into the realm of invisible enemies, the powers of evil. Everything that our mind can imagine more beautiful spiritually; everything the proudest that our race can produce, greater, more just, more powerful, wiser, purer, more diligent and more heroic, this is what the Legionary school must give us! A man in whom all the possibilities of human grandeur that are implanted by God in the blood of our people be developed to the maximum. This hero, the product of Legionary education, will also know how to elaborate programs; will also know how to solve the Jewish problem; will also know how to organize the state well; will also know how to convince the other Romanians; and if not, he will know how to win, for that is why he is a hero. This hero, this Legionary of bravery, labor and justice, with the powers God implanted in his soul, will lead our Fatherland on the road of its glory."

The Legion, because it needed a strong structure of organization, was designed as a hierarchical system. The basic unit of the Legion was called a nest, numbering from simply three to thirteen members. At each level of the Legion, from the nest to town, city, county, and regional sections up to the *Căpitanul* ("Captain"), the top leadership role which Codreanu attained, the leaders were not chosen by election but by bravery and skill. The movement would be opposed to the republican system, which Codreanu observed did not really represent will of the people, and replace it with a new form of government in which a leader would be *selected* rather than *elected*, and would not be able to do what he personally wishes, but only what is best for the nation. He explained the role of the leader in this way, "He (the leader) does not do what he wants, he does what he has to do. And he is guided, not by individual interests, nor by collective ones, but instead by the interests of the eternal nation, to the consciousness of which the people have attained. In the framework of these interests and only in their framework, personal interests as well as collective ones find the highest degree of normal satisfaction."

All the members of the Legion were educated in Christian virtues, love of nation, and were taught to be disciplined and disinterested in battle. The Legionaries marched and sang national songs together along with volunteering to help impoverished lower class Romanians (especially peasants) in building, reparing houses, assisting in farming, and other areas of work. The Legion's nests were to be self-sufficient, not reliant on buying materials for survival.

Codreanu and other nationalist Romanians had witnessed for many years the Romanian people suffering at the hands of the Capitalists which were largely Jews only interested in profit, having no sympathy for Romanians. The peasants were extremely poor, in some areas even to the point of starving, and barely surviving by borrowing money at interest rates from Jewish money-lenders. Jew-owned companies were chopping down forests at alarming rates, destroying the source of livelihood for certain groups of peasants such as the Moti. Jewish speculators were

buying up land and malnutrition was widespread, making the situation seem grim for the Romanian people.

The Legionary Movement grew, spreading through across Romania and determined to change this situation by finally banishing the Jews who usually had little sympathy for Gentiles. Through charity and volunteer work, they revealed that they were not another corrupt party interested in power and money. By 1929, in order to progress further, the Legionaries were forced to create a political branch of the Legion to run for elections. This organization was called *Garda de Fier* ("Iron Guard"), which is the name by which the Legionary Movement would later be commonly called.

Throughout the early 1930s Iron Guard members marched through villages, wearing the green-colored uniform with a white cross sewn on the shirt. Top Legionaries including Codreanu were making speeches, sometimes at night marches, calling for the regeneration of Romania and the expulsion of the Jews. But influential Jews and established political parties were determined to stop the Iron Guard. In certain areas, Codreanu and other top Legionaries were illegally barred from speaking and often beaten by policemen as well as Jews, usually without provocation. Unfortunately, they also got into clashes with members of the L.A.N.C., also called Cuzists, who viewed them as a threat to their success.

Eventually, by 1932, Codreanu and his father entered the Romanian National Assembly through elections in Moldavia. Despite this, the treatment of Legionaries got worse as time passed, and all members, including girls, were beaten and humiliated. By 1933, the Liberal Party, led by Ion Duca, was elected into power and declared that it would exterminate the Iron Guard.

In that same year, Duca's government, after having already terrorized, tortured, and assassinated several Legionaries, went ahead and banned the Legion to keep it from participating in elections, leading to the arrest of around 18,000 Legionaries (although Codreanu succeeded in hiding). The Legionaries Nicolae Constantinescu, Doro Belimace and Ion Caranica then assassinate Ion Duca for revenge, and immediately turn themselves in to the police. Following this, the tortures and assassinations of Legionaries by the government multiply.

By the fall of 1936, the Legion decided to send a symbolic team of seven top Legionaries to Spain to help Francisco Franco fight the Marxist Republicans. While fighting there, Ion Mota and Vasile Marin died at Majadahonda, near Madrid. At the funeral, before the bodies of Mota and Marin, Codreanu declared in an "Oath of Ranking Legionaries" (1937): "That is why you are going to swear that you understand that being a Legionary elite in our terms means not only to fight and win, but it also means above all a permanent sacrifice of oneself to the service of the Nation; that the idea of an elite is tied to the ideas of sacrifice, poverty, and a hard, bitter life; that where self-sacrifice ends, there also ends the Legionary elite." Later there were large funeral processions all over Romania, and in the next year a new elite unit in the Legionary Movement was created, the "Mota-Marin Corps".

In March of 1938, Codreanu sends a letter to Nicolae Iorga to complain of Iorga's campaign of calumny against the Legion, in which he tells Iorga that he is a dishonest person who has taken part in the oppression of innocent people. Iorga, insulted, the files a lawsuit against Codreanu,

which results in King Carol II (who had earlier established himself as a dictator, changing the constitution) and his Minister, Armand Calinescu, then arrest Codreanu (and then thousands of Legionaries) and condemning him to six months in prison. The government organizes a second trial to take place, closed to the public and extremely biased, in which Codreanu is sentenced to ten years in prison for unreasonable and unproven accusations of sedition and treason. Calinescu, a few months later, then has the military police murder Codreanu, acting outside of the law (this occurred on November 30, 1938).

After Codreanu's death terrible persecutions of the Legion continued, and eventually a group of nine Legionaries assassinate Calinescu. General Argeseanu, the new leader in the Romanian government, then executes 252 Legionaries and imprisons thousands more, intensifying the persecution yet more. By 1940, The Legionaries, under the leadership of Horia Sima, attempted to negotiate with King Carol II. Later that year, General Ion Antonescu would finally overthrow King Carol's government, resulting in the National Legionary State ruled jointly by Sima and Antonescu.

Comments About Codreanu from Notable People

Codreanu was seen by many people as being an extremely charismatic and influential person. Even the Hungarian speaking Jewish historian Nicholas Nagy-Talavera commented:

> "There was suddenly a hush in the crowd. A tall, darkly handsome man dressed in the white costume of a Rumanian peasant rode into the yard on a white horse. He halted close to me, and I could see nothing monstrous or evil in him. On the contrary. His childlike, sincere smile radiated over the miserable crowd, and he seemed to be with it yet mysteriously apart from it. Charisma is an inadequate word to define the strange force that emanated from this man. He was more aptly simply part of the forests, of the mountains, of the storms on the snow-covered peaks of the Carpathians, and of the lakes and rivers. And so he stood amid the crowd, silently. He had no need to speak. His silence was eloquent; it seemed to be stronger than we, stronger than the order of the prefect who denied him speech. An old, whitehaired peasant woman made the sign of the cross on her breast and whispered to us, 'The emissary of the Archangel Michael!' Then the sad little church bell began to toll, and the service which invariably preceded Legionary meetings began. Deep impressions created in the soul of a child die hard. In more than a quarter of a century I have never forgotten my meeting with Corneliu Zelea Codreanu."

The famous Italian intellectual Julius Evola was fascinated with him as well, and wrote of his meeting with Codreanu upon visiting Romania in his article "The Tragedy of the Romanian 'Iron Guard': Codreanu":

> "Through a group of Legionaries who part comes towards us a young, tall, slender man, with an uncommon expression of nobleness, frankness and energy imprinted on his face : azure grey eyes, open forehead, genuine Roman-Aryan type : and, mixed with virile traits, something contemplative, mystical in the expression. This is Corneliu Codreanu, the leader and founder of the Romanian 'Iron Guard', the one who is called 'assassin',

> 'Hitler's henchman', 'anarchist conspirator', by the world press, because, since 1919, he has been challenging Israel, and the forces which are more or less in cahoots with it, at work in the Romanian national life."

Horia Sima, Codreanu's successor as commander of the Legion in 1940, gave a description of Codreanu's appearance and character in his book *Istoria Mişcarii Legionare* ("History of the Legionary Movement"):

> "There is no doubt, that in this world, there are all sorts of people who look nice, but are empty inside; who do not feel either moral or spiritual aspirations in addition to the physical gifts with which nature blessed them ... But Corneliu Codreanu, his magnificient physique corresponds to an exceptional inner wholeness. Exclamations of admiration from men left him indifferent. Praise angered him. He had only a fighter's greatness and the ambition of great reformers... The characteristic of his soul was goodness. If you want to penetrate the initial motive which prompted Corneliu Codreanu to throw in a fight so hard and almost desperate, the best answer is that he did it out of compassion for suffering people. His heart bled with thousands of injuries to see the misery in which peasants and workers struggled. His love for the people - unlimited! He was sensitive to any suffering the working masses endured. He had a cult for the humble, and showed an infinite attention to their aspirations and their hopes. The smallest window, the most trivial complaint, were examined with the same seriousness with which he addressed grave political problems."

The Legionary Movement After Codreanu



Horia Sima

Horia Sima joined the Legion of the Archangel Michael in November of 1927, the same year it was founded by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu. But Sima was prominent only when he first became the leader of the Legion in October of 1938, after a new Legionary Command (of which Sima was a part) was organized due to the fact that Corneliu Codreanu was imprisoned and other top Legionaries arrested or assassinated. In 1940, Sima and Ion Antonescu made a coup against the tyrannical King Carol II and together created the National Legionary State. It was only after this state was established that Horia Sima became the top commander of the Legion. Of the establishment of the National Legionary State, Horia Sima said in his book Era Libertații - Statul național-Legionar vol. 1 ("It was Freedom - National Legionary State vol. 1") that "Rarely in our people's history has there been experienced a moment of collective exaltation of as impressive enthusiasm as that of the popular masses after the expulsion of King Carol from the country. You cannot even compare the intensity of national sentiment with that rush of joy in the annexed provinces, when the Union of 1918 was formed."

Sima and Antonescu then proceeded to nationalise or Romanianize the nation's economy, trade, industry, and mass media. Jews had previously gained an unreasonable and ridiculous amount of ownership of factories, companies, newspapers, cinemas, and various economic positions. Romania would no longer allow the Jews, an alien ethnicity whose influence previously had negative effects on Romanian life, to dominate their nation's economy and media and distort Romanian culture and lifestyle.

In November 1940, Legionary Romania joins the Tripartite Pact of National Socialist Germany, Italy, and Japan, bringing Romania into World War II on the side of the Axis powers. However, the dual leadership of Sima and Antonescu is imperfect, since Antonescu is extremely ambitious and wants to gain complete power by personally becoming the leader of the Legionary Movement. In January of 1941, Antonescu prepared a personal meeting with Adolf Hitler without notifying Sima or any other Legionary leaders (which results in Sima being unable to participate) and leaves for Berlin on January 13th. Antonescu discusses with Hitler the possibility of a war with the Soviet Union and the conditions for Romania's participation in that war. Antonescu argues that the Romanian army is on his side and if Hitler wants Romania to join in fighting the U.S.S.R., Germany must remain neutral in the event of a conflict between him (Antonescu) and the Legionary Movement.

General Antonescu in a few days then prepares for a coup d'etat against the Legion by having anti-Legionary propaganda spread through rumours claiming that Legionaries are undisciplined, are engaging in scuffles with military members, and are of questionable use in war. Antonescu then takes various anti-Legionary actions, including removing various prominent Legionaries from government positions and eventually beginning to arrest and imprison Legionary leaders. In this situation, on January 21 of 1941, Horia Sima and a large amount of Legionaries rebel against Antonescu and although they later try to make agreements, Antonescu harshly represses the Legionaries. In another meeting with Hitler, Antonescu convinces the German leader that the Legionaries are "fanatics" that need to be suppressed. The Romanian government under Antonescu then became highly authoritarian and began to arrest and kill hundreds of Legionaries. By April of 1941, Horia Sima and many other members of the Legion flee into German territory and are then confined to compulsory quarters in certain camps, although they are treated well by the Germans.

During World War II, Romania under Antonescu took part in *Operation Barbarossa*, fighting with the Axis against the Soviet Union. After the Battle of Stalingrad was lost, the Soviets expanded westwards. As the Soviet armies were moving into Romania in 1944, Antonescu contemplated making peace with the Allies but decided to firmly stay in the Axis alliance. Because of this decision, the Royal Coup of August 23 occurred that year, in which groups led by King Michael I decided to remove Antonescu from power by surrounding him and having him arrested. Romania then switched sides in World War II, joining the Allies, and the Germans reacted by releasing Horia Sima and the other Legionaries. Upon this release, Sima established with German help a Legionary government in Vienna to assist in the battle against Communism. However, by 1945 the Soviet conquest could not be stopped so they retreated westwards.

Sima and most other Legionaries fled to Italy or to parts of Germany, where they established Romanian Committees to help Romanian refugees fleeing from Communism get into Western Europe. By 1949-50, Sima and other top Legionaries started collaborating with French, American, and British authorities to fight Communism, especially by assisting in emigrants from the Soviet Union (which would weaken Communist regimes in Eastern Europe). The French-American military then assisted in preparing Legionaries to move into Romania in order to physically fight Communists and start an anti-Communist uprising in that nation. By 1954, the agreement was cancelled due to Soviet infiltration of British intelligence (led by Kim Philby) and because Western powers wanted to establish a "peaceful coexistence" with Stalin's regime.

Although some Legionaries in Romania continued fighting the Communists into the 1960s, most Legionaries went into exile, scattered across nations in Europe, North America, South America, and Australia. Horia Sima, from the 1950s onwards, had lived throughout Germany, Italy, France, and finally to Franco's Spain (where he received political refugee status). Various dissident groups created factions splitting off from Horia Sima's rule, although Sima was considered leader by the largest amount of Legionaries. For decades later, most Legionaries could not do much other than write articles, books, and translate works. However, in 1989 after Ceausescu's Communist regime was overthrown in Romania, Sima and other Legionaries took the opportunity to attempt to revive Legionarism in Romania. Legionaries created various parties, although Sima could not go to Romania himself since he had been sentenced to death there since 1946. Unfortunately, the Legionary parties came into conflict with each other and none could establish a large movement. Sima died in May 25, 1993 in Madrid, Spain unable to end the quarrels among the various groups. However, the Legionary Movement still continued in its new form and modern Legionaries today are still working to educate the younger generations as to the truth of Legionary history.

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Links to Websites

- http://www.codreanu.ro/ - Website Dedicated to Corneliu Zelea Codreanu with information available in Romanian, English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, and Russian.
- http://www.miscarea.net/ - "Legionary Documentation Center" with info available in English, Spanish, French, Italian, and German.
- http://thompkins_cariou.tripod.com/id15.html - "The Tragedy of the Romanian 'Iron Guard': Codreanu" by Julius Evola.
- http://www.archive.org/details/CorneliuCodreanuSpeechTranslatedIntoEnglish – Video of Codreanu speech with English translation.